The Lenin School

The Lenin School has 800 pupils. In some ways, the descriptions may seem commonplace or unimportant. But in Oman, where there is a war going on, it is a feat that deserves to be recounted. It is part of the armed struggles of the peoples of the Arab Gulf against Anglo-American imperialism and its puppets, Saudi Arabia, Iran and the emirates.

In the liberated areas, notably in Dhofar, despite aerial bombardments and enormous difficulties, life goes on. The people's desire to build a new society awakened the desire to learn and the need for instruction. Thus, in the beginning, two institutions were created. In the first, called the Revolutionary Camp, military, political and cultural instruction were offered.

The other, the Center of the Martyrs, provided basic education for the widows and children of those who fell in the struggle.

At the same time, a literacy campaign was launched. The first students were war orphans and children whose parents had had to leave the liberated areas. But, because of increased needs, this soon proved to be inadquate, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman and the Arab Gulf (PFLOAG) decided, on April 1, 1970, to build the Lenin School.

The beginning was not easy. There were neither permanent programs nor permanent teachers, only volunteers. First, the school was established in Western Oman. Then, because of heavy bombings, it was transferred to Keida, in the sixth district, along South Yemen's eastern border.

At that point, one of the women fighters, who had a university education, undertook the reorganization of the school. Because nothing was available, it was necessary to begin by using texts and programs from other Arab countries, notably Lebanon, Egypt and Syria. But, soon, these materials proved inappropriate for the task, since they were dominated by reactionary imperialist idcolgogy. Some works printed in Lebanon went so far as to proclaim the superiority of the white race!

Once again, it was necessary to start over, and the PFLOAG militants had to establish a program based upon the immediate needs of the people in the liberated areas.

The Lenin School soon functioned successfully for both boys and girls. In May 1971, there were 500 pupils, with those at higher levels beginning to teach the younger ones. Programs included physics, chemistry, biology, mathematics, algebra, history and geography.

It is true that difficulties continued to occur, primarily because of the contradiction between the deep under-development of the country and the need to teach modern concepts. As for teaching materials, the shortage remained serious, and on this question, the leaders of PFLOAG never received responses from the Arab governments that they had approached for assistance. Thus, instruction remained excessively empirical, and, for example, students could not begin to study algebra until they were nearly 15 years old.

However, the number of pupils continued to grow, and today there are 800. It was necessary to open another school, the School of the Ninth of June, which specializes in elementary education. (In June 1971, the third national congress of the PFLOAG had extensively discussed the question of education.)

In the beginning, classes were held in tents or under canvas shelters. Today, all classes are held in tents. The students receive three meals a day, with meat and milk. Corporal punishment is forbidden; it has been replaced by the practice of criticism and self-criticism. The young Dhofaris who enter the schools are admitted regardless of their families' situations. All students receive military instruction as soon as they are old enough.

All this can seem very insignificant to well-fed observers from more advanced countries. But the PFLOAG, which has organized its militants into four large units, explains that the two schools cost as much money as to field one of these units. One can make the comparison and weigh the matter on its own merits.

At the same time, permanent efforts are made to emancipate women. They participate in all activities, including armed struggle. For centuries, the women of Oman and the Gulf, oppressed by backward customs, by reactionary practices and feudal morality, were the most exploited persons in the region. Today, they have transcended the state that had been assigned them and are beginning to participate in the patriotic struggle, even in villages that are not yet liberated. In 1970, the Association of Omani women was created in Oman under the leadership of a young woman, Awatef Arraimi.

But the association was quickly proscribed by the feudal authorities and had to become clandestine, facing the constant menace of the police apparatus.

Under these conditions, and while military action is still developing, the revolutionary leaders do not understate their difficulties.

Moreover, the schools lack laboratory instruments, films, documentation...and especially worthwhile book in Arabic.

Shouldn't progressive Arabs consider it their duty to aid the cultural battle in Oman and Gulf states, a battle without which armed struggle will not be enough to create a new, free, and just society?

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